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AUTHOR Groppelli, Angela
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ABSTRACT

This paper reports findings concerning the identification of gifted and talented students from low socioeconomic groups, based on research at a Catholic school for gifted students in Rome, Italy. It reports that social and cultural family disadvantage, lack of education, and poor nutrition decrease IQ scores by 15 to 20 points. The category of "potential gifted" is proposed for children who were considered to be talented in their own environment but did not meet objective criteria. The program at the school is briefly described, and ongoing research with 56 students who attended the school from 1946 through 1968 and 174 college-age students admitted from 1983 to 1989 is noted. Data comparing gifted students and potential gifted students found no significant differences between the two groups on such variables as type of hometown, type of high school, and grades. (Contains 10 references.) (DB)

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ED 395 435

Angela GROPPELLI
Università di Roma La Sapienza
Comunità Domenico Tardini Foundation in Villa Nazareth, Rome

IDENTIFYING GIFTED/TALENTED LOW S.E.S STUDENTS

In September 1951, the Psycho-Pedagogical medical center of the National Board for Child Moral Protection (direct by prof. Claudio Busnelli), requested by cardinal Domenico Tardini later to become the Vatican City Secretary of State, the Villa Nazareth founder, asked me to prepare a plan and select gifted five years old children.

With doctor Carlo Traversa's advice, member of the National Council of Research, I prepared a behaviour observation file-card I and chose as psychodiagnostic survey the Binet-Simon's metric Scale with the Borel-Maisonny's evolution, the Goodenough's "Puppet", Fay's "the Lady walks and it rains", and the Porst's "Family drawing".

Villa Nazareth placed at my disposal the social file-card, filled in by the experts in the children's family place of origin, and the medical card filled in by doctor Mario Cirielli, the Institute doctor.

Another contribution was given by the American Sisters of Charity, who received and took care of children and visiting people.

Since 1951, except 1956, I always took part in the entrance examinations as psychologist and team co-ordinator, thus contributing to the stability in methodology and in the standards of evaluation.

In 1967 having 356 files about the five years old children examined by the Binet-Simon scale, I proceeded to the item analysis, and I identified, in connection with the age and the IQ, the level of difficulty of tests and those which were more correlated to the variables.

Other tests used for longitudinal assessments of evolution and for entrance examinations for subjects of different ages were: the Weschler for children, the WB forme I II for adults, and mostly the Raven's Matrice Progressive 1938 Test. Also for this test I chose the Italian standard; but for my score evaluation I always used the English standardization.

Moreover in the entrance examination research I added the "Fables" of Düss, the "Person Drawing I and II" of Machover, "The Tree" of Koch according to the Stora changes, a very detailed informative questionnaire; and moreover a written test about the critical and cultural sensitivity and an interview about the community life and religious sense.

Some other unchanged conditions for the classification were: the low economic and social-cultural conditions of family environment, objectively assessed or with regards to the professional and cultural expectations of family and children.

The psychodiagnostic scores were communicated labelling every subject with three variables: intelligence, character, behaviour with + o -. Scores have never been given to the team on centili or on the IQ derived from the tests.

As former students who attended Villa Nazareth have kept in touch with the institution since it become a Community Foundation (most of 1946-1969 students and all from 1980 on), making the results publicly known was considered inappropiate before having first received by the examined persons (as we now have) consent and acquired conscientiousness of the importance of possible research elaboration, either scientific or social.

In my graduation thesis "Chronological age, mental age and education" (data were recorded in 1948-1950) I had already shown that the social and cultural disadvantage of the family, the lack

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of education, underfeeding and inappropriate nutrition inflicted a heavy impact on the results of the IQ tests tallying up to 15-20 points less than the real capacities of the subjects. The results came out from a test of 120 disadvantaged and scholarly retarded subjects of the Città dei Ragazzi of Santa Marinella and of 120 subjects of the same age with a regular education and environment.

In the entrance examination of 1951 the examined children, and especially the orphans or poor ones, did not reach a high IQ though, in their own environment, they were considered to be gifted/talented children. Thus, I availed myself of my experience and I suggested the "potential gifted" hypothesis which was confirmed in the following year. Indeed, a subject that reached an IQ of 85 points in the admission test, managed to reach 113 in the following year and 136 after two years.

In my activity as a clinic psychologist, educational psycologist and as a researcher at university I have continuously confirmed the influence of environmental and subjective conditions on the results of mental tests as well as the importance of the interdisciplinary method for a correct individual estimation of test results.

I have also considered intelligence as a need to be accomplished and this can find its place on an individual level among civil rights along with freedom of conscience, religion, self realization, and, on a social level, along with problems of social justice.

This is even more true, if we consider psychology as related to humanity as a science of psychological well-being which can mend the "injustices" in natural inequalities like being born in a poor family, growing up in a unprivileged cultural environment, undergoing traumas or losing parents early in one's life or being subject to accidents or illness.

The results also prove that gifted children do not always obtain best results at school; on this ground, not even the grades on their diploma correspond to learning capacities.

How can one value or select gifted children?

Granted that it is enough to excel in one ability, I propose these variables:

1) excellence in performance;
2) excellence in IQ tests;
3) excellence in arts, social commitments and sports;
4) excellence, as a potential ones, can be hypothesized for those students, with a poor financial, emotional and socio-cultural background, who are reported to slow elements of excellence or who obtain excellent results in entry examinations and interviews.

Presently Villa Nazareth is managed by the Domenico Tardini Foundation (founded by Card. Achille Silvestrini, prof. Angela Groppelli and 50 students and supporters). Since its fondation in 1946 Villa Nazareth has hosted students from all over Italy, accepted by an entrance examination commitee. The programm is developed within Villa Nazareth trought dynamic relationships.

The programm is developed in a family climate: assertiveness, availability of spaces, economic and cultural resources, freedom of initiative, variety of proposal in order to improve students know-how, free access to library, computer and foreign language lab, cinema, music room, gymnasium in addition to lectures and 5-12 days seminars held in Villa Nazareth, computers and foreign languages classes, photography and theology courses, special dinners with distinguished representatives of Italian culture and stages throughout the world. The guidelines of the programm are the following:

- Freedom to follow personal choice of major,
- Tutorship for accademic curriculum, cultural program, specializing schools in Italy and abroad.
- An experience of great importance for student's growth is their sharing responsabilities in Villa Nazareth's management and social relations.

All students are granted support from Villa Nazareth until they are economically self-standing. Paid employees within Villa Nazareth are limited to cleaning, wardrobe and cafeteria services. Villa Nazareth gives to each one just what each one needs according to individual social conditions.

In Villa Nazareth the climate is oriented toward individual development through the proposal of the following guidelines:

1) The Christian significance of life
2) Respect for the freedom of the person
3) The value of Culture.

Villa Nazareth has a long history: from 1946 to 1969 selection was addressed to five year old children; from 1969 to 1983 new entrances were interrupted; from 1983 until today Villa Nazareth has addressed itself to college-level male and female students. Since 1983 students are given the choice to choose whether to stay home or come to Rome.

A sample of Villa Nazareth's students have been involved in the potential-plus research.

Students are devided in two different periods:

1) 1946-1968: 56 students still in touch with Villa Nazareth examined by BS IQ SCALE.
2) 1983-1989: 174 students, admitted from 1983 to 1989, examined by RAVEN PM 38.

"Gifted students" means subjects with BS IQ 120 (representing 10% of GAUSS scale) and RAVEN PM 38 from 54 points, reaching 90-100 percentile.

According to this definition in Villa Nazareth among 155 children of five years old admitted since 1951 to 1965, the "potential gifted students" are 103 (66,5 %), between 174 students admitted from 1983 to 1984, the potential plus are 89 (51,1 %).

For the purpose of the research, non confidential information have been used and all students data are easily accessible to anyone. To verify the criteria used in order to identify gifted people and those used for the "potential gifted", I used external criteria employing longitudinal data.

Comparison between gifted students and potential gifted (Binet-scale)

A sample of 56 students was considered since 1951 to 1965. They have been administrated Binet-scale according to two different variables:

1) professional achievement and type of job (University degree, high school degree, self employed with/without diploma.
2) community membership (founders, active members, connected).

Variable	chi-square	DF	significance
Type of job	0.92666	2	N.S.
Modality of relationship	2.57727	2	N.S.

Results of the research do not prove any evident difference among different samples and different variables.

Comparison between gifted students and potential gifted (Raven's PM 38 test)

A sample of 174 students was considered from 1983 to 1989. They have been administrated Raven's test according to five different variables:

1) homeplace (small cities without university, cities with universities)
2) type of high school (humanities or science)
3) SL grade (score 36 to 40)
4) exceeding year number (0, 1, 2, 3, 4, 5, and plus)
5) degree grade (score 90 to 110 magna cum laude).

Variable	chi-square	DF	significance
Homeplace	0.01887	2	N.S.
Type of high school	5.26170	2	N.S.
S L grade	1.63645	4	N.S.
Exceeding year number	2.84874	5	N.S.
Degree grade	2.11369	4	N.S.

Results of the research do not prove any evident difference among different samples and different variables.
Although criteria receive large confirmation, it is useful to proceed with the same analysis with respects to the sample of 32 who do not result excellent in the mental test or in the high school graduation results.
Taking into consideration the years of delay and graduation grade, this sample's trend is similar to that of the general sample (e.g. 54% graduate with full grades).
In fact the sample of 32 students has at least one of the following reasons to to be considered potential gifted:

1) They are economically disadvantaged (number of subjects: 5)
2) They are working students (number of subjects: 3)
3) They are orphans of mother or father (number of subjests: 10)
4) Family or personal problems (number of subjects: 7)
5) Excellent in interpersonal or artistic activities (number of subjests: 4)
6) They achieve brilliant results in other items of the examination (number of subjects: 3)

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